

**Statement for the Congressional Record**

**January 31, 2007**

**Debate on H.J. Res. 20**

□

Madame Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the process used by the Majority Party to write and debate the bill under consideration today. I did not vote for omnibus budget bills under the Republican Leadership, and I will not support omnibus bills under the Democrat Leadership.

Ranking Minority Members were not consulted on this legislation or provided an opportunity for input. In fact, most of the Majority Party's own Members had no input in this process. Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey instead directed his staff members to write major budget legislation behind closed doors without involving elected Members of Congress. It appears staff members of Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Byrd conducted negotiations on behalf of the Senate.

As reported in CongressDaily AM today, "most of the negotiations were conducted by staff." This information came from Chairman Obey, who also said that Members of Congress only became involved in the negotiations "when matters became difficult." Let me repeat that: Unelected congressional staff for Chairmen Obey and Byrd conducted negotiations on 9 of 11 major spending bills that make up the annual budget of the United States government.

Why do we have an Appropriations Committee if the committee members have no input in the

appropriations process? I propose the next legislation this Congress should debate is a bill to dissolve the House Appropriations Committee. It is clearly unnecessary since major budget negotiations can be conducted by staff instead of elected Members. Apparently, the Appropriations Committee consists entirely of Chairman Obey, who can single-handedly dictate the legislative process and assign his staff to take the place of elected Members of Congress.

Handing responsibilities for major budget negotiations to congressional staff for Chairmen Obey and Byrd is an abdication of responsibility. It also sets the stage for corruption on many levels. These staff-level negotiations were unknown to the public and the majority of elected Members. I am deeply concerned that damage and corruption to our laws will occur if Members of Congress are not thoroughly involved in the creation of legislation and knowledgeable about the contents of bills brought to a vote.

In addition, allowing only one hour of debate and no opportunity for amendments on major \$463.5 billion legislation that Members had only one day to review is further evidence of the Majority Party's lack of consideration for our system of government and the responsibilities of elected Members. I also wish Congress had completed the budget process last year, but this fact does not excuse the closed process used to write H.J. Res. 20 this week.

I sincerely hope the Majority Party will begin including elected Members of Congress in the process of lawmaking, as the Constitution intended, and as the American people rightly expect. Our system of government of the people, for the people, and by the people depends upon our ability to work together to accomplish the business of the American people. I urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to join me in calling for a return to the regular committee process and more fair and open debate of legislation with opportunities to offer amendments.

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

LEE TERRY, M.C.



